

Message Text

SECRET

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47 41

ORIGIN EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-15 RSC-01

IO-13 MC-02 SY-10 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00

PRS-01 OMB-01 USSS-00 L-03 EB-11 /123 R

DRAFTED BY EUR/SOV:JFMATLOCK:SLU
APPROVED BY P:UNDER SECRETARY PORTER
EUR:JAARMITAGE
S/S - MR. GAMMON

----- 047251

R 241639Z SEP 73
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

S E C R E T STATE 189495

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, UR, IT, US, XF
SUBJECT: TERRORIST POSSESSION OF SOVIET ORIGIN GROUND-
TO-AIR MISSILES
REF: (A) STATE 187034; (B) STATE 187035

1. UNDER SECRETARY PORTER CALLED IN SOVIET MINISTER-COUNSELOR VORONTSOV SEPTEMBER 21 TO EXPRESS OUR SERIOUS CONCERN OVER FACT THAT SA-7 MISSILES HAD FALLEN INTO TERRORIST HANDS. (DEMARCHE MADE TO VORONTSOV SINCE AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN WAS NOT IN WASHINGTON.)
2. UNDER SECRETARY NOTED THAT DEPARTMENT HAD MADE DEMARCHE TO SOVIETS LAST NOVEMBER ON DANGER OF SA-7 MISSILES FALLING INTO TERRORIST HANDS, AND HAD SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVED ASSURANCES FROM SOVIET GOVERNMENT THAT EVERY STEP WAS BEING TAKEN TO PREVENT THIS FROM HAPPENING.

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DESPITE THESE ASSURANCES, THE ROME AIRPORT INCIDENT

DEMONSTRATES THAT IN FACT THESE SOVIET WEAPONS HAVE FALLEN INTO HIGHLY IRRESPONSIBLE HANDS. IN VIEW OF THESE ASSURANCES, UNDER SECRETARY SAID WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN AN EXPLANATION OF THE MANNER IN WHICH SUCH A DANGEROUS WEAPON COULD HAVE FALLEN INTO UNAUTHORIZED HANDS AND A DESCRIPTION OF STEPS WHICH MIGHT BE TAKEN TO PREVENT A RECURRENCE.

3. VORONTSOV REPLIED THAT THE SOVIET EMBASSY HAS NOT BEEN INFORMED BY ITS GOVERNMENT REGARDING THE MANNER IN WHICH SOVIET WEAPONS MIGHT HAVE REACHED UNAUTHORIZED HANDS. HE ADDED THAT THE SOVIET EMBASSY HAD NOTED PRESS REPORTS OF THE ROME AIRPORT INCIDENT AND RECOGNIZED ITS GRAVITY. THERE HAD BEEN SPECULATION WITHIN THE EMBASSY THAT THE WEAPONS DISCOVERED IN ROME MIGHT BE AN "OLD MODEL" WHICH HAD BEEN SUPPLIED TO ANOTHER GOVERNMENT BEFORE OUR EXCHANGE ON THE SUBJECT LAST NOVEMBER. HE VOLUNTEERED TO SEEK AN EXPLANATION FROM SOVIET "DEFENSE AUTHORITIES" ON THE QUESTIONS RAISED BY UNDER SECRETARY PORTER. (NOTE: AS HE WAS LEAVING THE DEPARTMENT, VORONTSOV MENTIONED TO THE DIRECTOR OF EUR/SOV HIS PERSONAL SPECULATION THAT THE WEAPONS DISCOVERED IN ROME MIGHT HAVE COME FROM SOME SUPPLIED BY THE SOVIETS TO NORTH VIETNAM.)

4. UNDER SECRETARY PORTER REITERATED THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE CONTROLS ON THE DISSEMINATION OF WEAPONS OF THIS NATURE WHICH CAN POSE SUCH A GRAVE THREAT TO CIVIL AVIATION. SO FAR AS U.S. IS CONCERNED, WE EXERCISE RESTRAINT IN TWO RESPECTS: FIRST, WE MAINTAIN CAREFUL AND CONTINUING CONTROL OVER LOCATION OF WEAPONS, PERIODICALLY CHECKING TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE IN AUTHORIZED HANDS; SECOND, WE ALSO MAKE A DISTINCTION ON A REGIONAL BASIS, SINCE THE DANGER IS GREATER IN SOME AREAS THAN IN OTHERS.

5. VORONTSOV SAID HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN THROUGH SOVIET MILITARY CHANNELS SOME SPECIFICS ON SOVIET CONTROL PROCEDURES. HE ASKED WHAT COULD BE DONE IF THE WEAPONS WERE STOLEN. UNDER SECRETARY REPLIED THAT CERTAINLY THE RECIPIENT COUNTRY SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO REPORT THIS

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FACT TO THE DONOR.

6. UNDER SECRETARY PORTER REMARKED THAT WE HOPE THE WEAPONS DISCOVERED IN ROME ARE THE ONLY ONES TO FALL INTO IRRESPONSIBLE HANDS, BUT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT OTHERS ARE AT LARGE AND THEREFORE THE DANGER MAY NOT HAVE PASSED. WE ARE SURE THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT UNDERSTANDS THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION AND THE SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS

FOR BOTH OUR COUNTRIES.

7. VORONTSOV ASSURED THE UNDER SECRETARY THAT HIS
GOVERNMENT APPRECIATES THE DANGERS AND IMPLICATIONS OF
THIS SITUATION AND REITERATED HIS COMMITMENT TO SEEK
INFORMATION FROM HIS GOVERNMENT ON THE POINTS RAISED. RUSH

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